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## SUCCESS STORY

# Marketable Skills Give Young Men a Future

### Public-Private Partnerships Play Key Role in Chechnya's Recovery



[Photo: Nerys Bannister]

*Vakha and his students outside Aslanbek's factory in Urus-Martan. The young men were able to practice their skills and are now finding they are in high demand throughout the district as reconstruction expands in Chechnya.*

**To date over 500 people in Chechnya and Dagestan have taken part in the USAID-funded project VPERYED! (Go For It!).**

**Providing vocational training and business development support, the project is implemented by IRC in partnership with World Vision, Patriot and Modern Humanitarian Academy.**

For the community of Urus-Martan, Chechnya, unemployment is a worrying issue - with unemployment rates in the republic close to 80% following two successive wars. Aslanbek Elmurzaev, who runs a factory producing tiles, plastic windows and other building materials, and is also the chair of the town's Chamber of Commerce, explains "there are so many young men who have nothing to do once they have finished school". With no opportunities Aslanbek says, they run the risk of getting involved in criminal activities, further destabilizing a community recovering from conflict.

Aslanbek's business has now joined forces with IRC to provide employment opportunities to young men with few chances. He introduces Abadi, Shamil, Islam and Magomed, shy young men, who after leaving school found themselves with no opportunities to work or start further study. Finding out about the courses being offered by IRC and its partner Patriot, they applied and successfully landed places on the construction course.

From their tutor, Vakha Arsanov, these young men, along with 11 other class mates, learnt over two months how to lay tiles, install plastic windows and walling along with how to construct the kiosks which many small traders operate from. However there is only so much students can learn in the classroom and Vakha explains it was vital that if his students were to find work, they had to have practical experience.

This is where Aslanbek and his factory came in. He happily offered up space for the students to practice what they had learned in the classroom.

Many would balk at the idea of a group of unemployed young men invading their business and letting them loose on their factory floor. But, Aslanbek explains, this was a win/win situation for the young men and the business community. "We really need skilled young people like these guys – there's so much demand for their skills. If they have nothing to do, it becomes a problem for the community".

With reconstruction in Chechnya moving ahead the business community is crying out for these courses says Svetlana Tukaeva, IRC's Vocational Training Program Manager. IRC regularly receives requests for more students to be trained by local businesses. It is the focus on practical skills which makes the difference says Svetlana – it means graduates from the IRC construction course are in great demand.

Vakha is so impressed with the progress of his former students that he is recommending them to people and even hiring them to work on his own jobs. Aslanbek also recommends the graduates to his customers who come to buy building supplies, and the team has already completed two jobs in the local area. This is really important Vakha explains, as word of mouth is the best advertising in the construction business. As their reputation grows, Vakha says, Abadi, Shamil, Islam, Magomed and their fellow graduates will get more and more work, giving these young men a real start in life as well as helping Chechnya move forward in its recovery.